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### The ethnic 'other' in Ukrainian history textbooks: the case of Russia and the Russians

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# The ethnic ‘other’ in Ukrainian history textbooks: the case of Russia and the Russians

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This paper examines portrayals of Russia and the Russians in two generations of Ukrainian history textbooks. It observes that the textbooks are highly condemning of Ukraine’s main ethnic other in the guise of foreign ruler: the tsarist authorities and the Soviet regime are always attributed dubious and malicious intentions even if there is appreciation for some of their policies. By contrast, the books, certainly those of the second generation, refrain from presenting highly biased accounts of the ethnic other as a national group (i.e. Russians). Instances where negative judgements do fall onto Russians are counterbalanced by excerpts criticizing ethnic Ukrainians or highlighting conflicting interests within the Ukrainian ethnic group. The negative appraisal of the ethnic other as foreign ruler is clearly instrumental for the nation-building project as it sustains a discourse legitimating the existence of Ukraine as independent state. However, recent trends in history education, the paper concludes, suggest that the importance of nurturing patriotism as a national policy objective is diminishing.

**Keywords:** *Civic and ethnic conceptions of nationhood; Education; Ethnic stereotypes; Textbook analysis; Ukraine*

## Introduction

National consolidation is usually one of the top priorities of new states and education is often seen as the key agent in this process. By educating youngsters in the national language, history and culture, the political elites of these states hope to strengthen national unity and patriotism and abate internal divisions of an ethnic or social nature. Nation building policies like these have been well documented for both western and eastern states both now and in the past. Many studies have pointed to the problematic nature of these policies in multi-ethnic societies by noting that the promotion of one language and culture automatically leads to the demotion of another (e.g. Linz & Stepan, 1996; Kymlicka, 2001). In this sense, as one observer has perceptively noted, nation building also entails ‘nation destroying’ (Connor, 1972). There is a wealth of literature, particularly in relation to the post-communist

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states, highlighting the tensions that arise between the ethnic majority on the one hand and one or several minorities on the other when the latter resist the cultural unification programme of the former (e.g. Brubaker, 1996; Tishkov, 1997; Opalski, 1998; Kolstø, 2000). Most of this literature has focused on language issues, territorial autonomy and the representation of minorities in state institutions. Academia has paid relatively little attention to the role of history education in the construction of national identity despite its obvious relevance for nation building politics. Through education in national history the state attempts to root national identity in the past and nurture youngsters in a historical narrative that legitimizes state independence and the cultural politics of the state. The few studies that have focused on history education as a nationalizing agent (e.g. Hein & Selden, 2000; Koulouri, 2001; Vickers, 2005) have generally not linked their findings to theories and debates in the field of nationalism and ethnic conflicts. This study may be seen as an interdisciplinary effort to tackle this omission. It expands on some of my previous work in which I used textbook analysis to inform the ethnic-East/civic-West debate in the field of nationalism (e.g. Janmaat, 2006).

An important aspect of history education is the treatment of ethnic others. As Carras (2001) has noted, states with nationalizing programs usually portray ethnic others in a negative light in their history textbooks. Harmful effects of contacts with ethnic others are highlighted whereas positive results are downplayed or omitted altogether. This negative stereotyping of ethnic others may be said to have four functions for identity construction. First, it sets boundaries and distinguishes the in-group from the out-group. This boundary setting involves more than the simple ethnic labelling of persons and groups. By assigning certain vices to the out-group and certain virtues to the in-group, nation-builders can reinforce the uniqueness and depth of the in-group's identity and give its members the assured feeling of moral superiority. Second, by stressing the hostility of the out-group, it sweeps conflicts within the in-group under the carpet, which contributes to the latter's cohesion. Third, it provides a justification for a liberation struggle against a foreign 'oppressor' and for the establishment and consolidation of an independent state. Finally, it acquits the governing elite of a newly independent state from bad management by holding the former foreign regime responsible for the current problems in society (i.e. the scapegoat mechanism).

It must be noted that the ethnic stereotyping in textbooks and in other media has regularly been high on the agenda of (nongovernmental) international organizations promoting peace, human rights and democracy, certainly during or shortly after major international conflicts. Thus, as early as the 1920s the League of Nations launched various initiatives to combat mutual xenophobia, proceeding from the assumption that the national prejudice in textbooks must have contributed to the aggressive nationalism and militarism of the warring parties in World War I. A strikingly similar reaction occurred after World War II. In cooperation with the Council of Europe and the Georg Eckert Institute for International Textbook Research, UNESCO organized conferences, bilateral projects and the development of guidelines for improving teaching materials and textbooks in an effort to foster

international cooperation and understanding (Pingel, 1999). In similar vein, the eruption of violent ethnic conflicts following the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe sparked a series of activities of various organizations, including the Council of Europe and Euroclio (the European Standing Conference of History Teachers Associations), which in essence were all aimed at countering prejudice and intolerance and stimulating civic values, critical thinking and democracy. Thus, with each new round of violent conflict, international concern about the role of history education in fostering inter-ethnic animosity is gathering momentum.

This paper examines representations of the ethnic other in Ukrainian history textbooks. Ukraine is an interesting case to study as it is both a new state emerging from the ashes of the Soviet Union and a multi-ethnic and multi-lingual state, which means that the majority-minority problematic very much applies. Moreover, it is a state for which it is extremely easy to find a suitable ethnic other for the identity construction project: Russia and the Russians. From the partition of Poland at the end of the eighteenth century, much of what is present-day Ukraine has been ruled by Russia and its communist successor—the Soviet Union. This paper therefore focuses on portrayals of Russia and the Russians. The more prejudiced the books are towards this ethnic other, the more important the nationalizing agenda is considered to be in relation to other objectives of history education. In this respect, it is worth noting that the cultivation of national identity is an official—and therefore weighty—policy objective, as numerous documents testify. For instance, the strategic national programme ‘Education—Ukraine of the twenty-first century’, adopted in 1993 by a nationalist government headed by Ukraine’s first president Leonid Kravchuk, calls on education to espouse ‘a national orientation which proceeds from the indivisibility of education from national foundations, the organic unity with national history and folk traditions, and the preservation and enrichment of the culture of the Ukrainian people’ (Government of Ukraine, 1994, p. 7).

### **The ethnic other in history textbooks: differences between East and West?**

A factor that is likely to contribute to the negative stereotyping of the others in textbooks is a national narrative of victimization. As Koulouri (2001) and Kymlicka (2001) observed, there is a marked tendency among nations in the Balkans and in Eastern Europe to see themselves as victims of centuries of foreign oppression. Thus the Serbs and the Greeks hold grievances against the Turks, the Czechs against the Austrians and the Germans, the Slovaks and the Romanians against the Hungarians and the Poles, the Ukrainians and the Baltic nations against the Russians. In multi-ethnic states where minorities constituted the former rulers or were seen as collaborators with the foreign regime by the majority, inter-ethnic relations have remained tense in the post-communist period. As a rule, the majority distrusts the minority and suspects that it will opt for secession as soon as an opportunity arises. In conditions of ethnic conflict negative images of the ethnic other seem almost inescapable. Indeed, Koren (2001) observes that Croatian history and geography textbooks tend to give unflattering accounts of Serbs and

stress hostility and conflict rather than cooperation in their descriptions of Croatian-Serb relations.

This discussion raises an interesting point: given the prevailing sense of historical injustice in Eastern Europe, is historiography in that region fundamentally different from that in Western Europe? Some scholars support this view. Hans Kohn (1944; 1994), for instance, saw nationalist historiography as a necessary companion of an ethnic intolerant nationalism. This type of nationalism looked to the past as a source of inspiration, perceiving the nation as a natural and eternal entity defined by common historical experience, culture and descent. It prevailed, in Kohn's view, in those regions of Europe where feudal relations predominated, i.e. in Central and Eastern Europe. He contrasted this with a civic liberal nationalism which 'arose in an effort to build a nation in the political reality and the struggles of the present without too much sentimental regard for the past' (Kohn, 1994, p. 164). He saw civic nationalism as characteristic of societies with strong middle classes—America, Britain, France, The Netherlands and Switzerland. Echoing Kohn, Velychenko (1993) argues that 'the poorer, authoritarian societies east of the Elbe' pay much more attention to the identity construction function of historiography than the 'wealthier, pluralist and constitutional societies of Western Europe' because the national identities of the former rely to a much greater extent on historical myths and legends.

Kohn's view has been criticised for failing to recognize that Western nations also have ethnic and historical roots (Smith, 1986). It is not denied that there are differences between nations in the strength of ethnic conceptions but these are seen as a matter of degree and not of absolute difference (Smith, 1991). Kuzio (2002) has suggested that the mix of ethnic and civic conceptions of nationhood in any given state has nothing to do with geography but is contingent on the age of that state and on the consolidation of democracy. Moreover, returning to historiography, it has been noted that historical writings in the West have not always been friendly on ethnic others as well. Marsden (2000) for instance notes that the glorification of war and the vilification of neighbouring states permeated the history and geography textbooks of Great Britain, France, the USA and Germany from the 1880s to the 1940s, despite efforts of the League of Nations to curb rampant chauvinism in textbooks in the interwar period. Berghahn and Schissler (1987) observe that it took a world war and a sustained effort of UNESCO and the Council of Europe before western states began removing nationalist leanings and ethnic stereotypes from their educational materials. Thematically, history textbooks diversified, addressing socio-economic and cultural issues and paying more attention to European and international issues (for a description of this process in German and French history and civics textbooks, see Soysal, Bertilotti and Mannitz, 2005). In terms of pedagogical objectives, they exchanged the infusion of values, identities and pre-digested, unquestioned knowledge for the promotion of critical thinking, causal understanding and independent analysis (Berghahn & Schissler, 1987). Antoniou and Soysal (2005) remark that Greece and Turkey, recently, have also turned their backs on nationalistic content and stereotypical images of the other in the teaching of national history.

Is history going to repeat itself for Eastern Europe? Can we, in other words, expect eastern states to start off with ethnocentric narratives in the immediate post-communist era and gradually substitute them for more neutral accounts of the ethnic other as their institutions and democracies mature and they grow more self-confident? The assumption that Eastern Europe will simply copy the trends witnessed in the West overlooks the fact that the world is not the same as 70 years ago. Human rights, liberalism, democracy and recognition of cultural difference have become influential worldwide discourses in the post-colonial era (Soysal & Schissler, 2005). At the same time, developments in communication technology have given ordinary citizens an unprecedented opportunity to familiarize themselves with information and points of view not appreciated by the state. As a result, the nation-building projects of new states have been challenged both from below, by independent well-informed citizens and national minorities, and from above, by international agencies that closely monitor these states' cultural policies. Is it at all possible in these conditions to pursue monolithic nationalizing projects that denigrate the ethnic other? Or are we all deceived by the rhetoric of globalization, and is a very thin layer of highly visible successful urbanites disguising the fact that the rest of the population in the newly independent states still think in traditional terms? Indeed there seems to be some evidence that long-established ethnocentric views are much more resilient than international organizations are willing to admit (who seem to have the image of citizens as well-informed, non-prejudiced, vocal and rational decision makers). Anderson (2005), for instance, observes that a new history course, introduced by the Moldovan government in 2003 and supported by the Council of Europe, was met with suspicion and hostility by ethnic Romanian teachers and parents, who perceived it as a shrewd attempt by their government to re-Sovietize and de-nationalize them.

### **Methodological approach and textbook selection**

In the light of all these observations, how are the Russians as Ukraine's main ethnic other presented in history textbooks? Is Ukraine, in Kohn's terminology, behaving like a typical 'ethnic intolerant' state by attributing only bad intentions to the Russians? Do we see differences between generations of textbooks reflecting a change towards more balanced accounts of the ethnic other?

I will explore these questions by analysing two generations of textbooks for the History of Ukraine course, which the government instituted after independence. The ethnic other can be conceived of as a foreign ruler (Russia and the Soviet Union) or as a national group (the Russians). I will examine textbook representations of both these manifestations. I have further identified three 'positive' periods and three 'negative' periods in history when Ukraine was ruled by a foreign power. The positive periods are characterized by peace, rising standards of living and an expansion of civic and cultural liberties. By contrast, war, famine, sharply declining standards of living and/or increased oppression feature in the negative periods. I identified the reign of Alexander II (1855–1881), the Soviet 1920s and

Khrushchev's Thaw (1956–1965) as the positive periods and the rule of Catherine II (end of eighteenth century), the consolidation of Bolshevik power in Ukraine (1917–1921) and the collectivization of agriculture in the 1930s as the negative periods.

To assess how the textbooks write about the ethnic other in these periods, I will employ the following criteria:

1. *Positive appraisals*. Do the textbooks also offer positive judgements about the foreign ruler's policies, or about the actions of members of the other national group? Are these judgements immediately followed by qualifications?
2. *Intentions*. Is the ethnic other described as motivated solely by malign intentions?
3. *Ethnic labelling*. Is there explicit ethnic labelling of perpetrators and victims? Are Russians exclusively seen as perpetrators and Ukrainians only as victims?
4. *Normative language*. Are negative appraisals of the ethnic other reinforced by strong normative language?

I selected the following textbooks for the analysis:

First generation:<sup>1</sup>

Kul'chyts'kyi, S. V., Kurnosov, Y. & Koval', M. V. (1994) *Istoria Ukrainy: Chastyna I*. (Kyiv, Osvita).

Sarbei, V. H. (1996) *Istoria Ukrainy: XIX—Nachalo XX Veka* (Kyiv, Heneza).

Serhienko, H. Y. & Smolyi, V. A. (1995) *Istoria Ukrainy: S Drevneishikh Vremen do Kontsa XVIII Veka* (Kyiv, Osvita).

Turchenko, F. H. (1995) *Noveishaia Istoria Ukrainy: Chast' Pervaia (1917–1945 Gody)* (Kyiv, Heneza).

Turchenko, F. H., Panchenko, P. P. & Tymchenko, C. M. (1995) *Noveishaia Istoria Ukrainy: Chast' Vtoraia (1945–1995 Gody)* (Kyiv, Heneza).

Second generation:

Kul'chyts'kyi, S. V. & Shapoval, Y. I. (2003) *Novitnia Istoria Ukrainy (1914–1939)*. (Kyiv, Heneza).

Shvyd'ko, H. K. (2003) *Istoria Ukrainy: XVI–XVIII Stolittia* (Kyiv, Heneza).

Turchenko, F. H. (2002) *Novitnia Istoria Ukrainy: Chastyna Persha 1914–1939* (Kyiv, Heneza).

Turchenko, F. H. & Moroko, V. M. (2004) *Istoria Ukrainy: Kinets' XVIII—Pochatok XX Stolittia* (Kyiv, Heneza).

Turchenko, F. H., Panchenko, P. P. & Tymchenko, C. M. (2004) *Novitnia Istoria Ukrainy: Chastyna Druha 1939–2001* (Kyiv, Heneza).

There is good reason to assume that these textbooks were and are widely used as they are all officially approved by the Ukrainian Ministry of Education.<sup>2</sup> After independence, the Ministry chose to continue the centralized Soviet approach to history education by issuing detailed national curricula and by closely supervising the textbook adoption, production and dissemination process.<sup>3</sup> It also copied the practice of carving history up into a world history and a national history course, thus underlining the distinctiveness of Ukrainian nation- and statehood. Yet, from the



onset the Ministry has been careful to involve other agencies in the textbook writing and adoption procedure. In cooperation with the National Academy of Sciences, the Academy of Pedagogical Sciences and private publishers and foundations, it organizes annual competitions for new textbooks. The awarded textbooks are first tried and tested in schools and—if necessary—revised before receiving the official stamp of approval. Schools are obliged to use the officially approved textbooks but are free to use any kind of additional materials. Moreover, the Ministry seeks to diversify the offer of textbooks by providing schools with a choice of at least two textbooks per grade (Krylach & Kul'chyts'kyi, 1999). Thus, the Ministry seems committed to allowing some measure of pluralism in the teaching of national history in schools.

### **Portrayals of the ethnic other in 'negative' periods**

The elimination of the semi-autonomous Cossack state by Tsarina Catherine II in 1775 is an important negative event in Ukrainian historiography. It not only signals the total subjugation to Russian Tsarist rule, but also the reinforcement of serfdom and a retreat of the Ukrainian language from public affairs. Indeed, Serhienko and Smolyi (1995) and Shwyd'ko (2003), the two textbooks examined for this period, both present narratives resembling lamentations of injustices and oppression. The actions of the Russian government are seen as being solely motivated by a lust for power and a desire to extract profit from Ukraine's thriving agricultural economy. On occasion using strong normative language, the books recount how the plight of the peasants and free Cossack farmers worsened under Catherine's rule by the imposition of taxes, the re-introduction of labour duties and regulations tying peasants to the land. The implication of these extracts is clear: the attitude of the Russian government toward the Ukrainian peasantry was one of complete indifference at best and of open hostility at worst. Yet, although the peasantry is presented as the cornerstone of Ukrainian nationhood, class relations are not exclusively cast in ethnic terms with an 'innocent' Ukrainian peasantry being exploited by 'cruel' Russian or Polish nobility. To the contrary, Shwyd'ko (2003) contends that Catherina II restricted the freedom of movement of the peasantry on request of some Ukrainian nobles. He also notes that the Ukrainian landed gentry appealed to the tsarina to be given the same rights as the Russian nobility, seeing their request fulfilled by the Decree on the Independence of the Nobility (Shwyd'ko, 2003, p. 266). It is interesting that Shwyd'ko identifies the nobility as Ukrainian while its predecessor (Serhienko & Smolyi, 1995) is silent about the ethnicity of the aristocracy. This could be a sign that the new generation of textbooks is less apprehensive about challenging the myth that everything was peace and amity within the ethnic Ukrainian community.

The second period that could be qualified as particularly traumatic in Ukrainian history is the establishment of Bolshevik rule in the early 1920s. The books covering this period (Turchenko, 1995, 2001; Kul'chyts'kyi & Shapoval, 2003) all meticulously discuss how the Bolsheviks after the October Revolution became

involved in a fierce struggle with the Central Rada, a Ukrainian parliament created in March 1917, to win the hearts and minds of the Ukrainian population. Unsurprisingly, these books present the latter as the only political body that legitimately represented the Ukrainian nation and argue that the Bolsheviks were essentially a foreign power that imposed its rule on Ukraine. Although the books concede that the Bolsheviks had significant support among the urban proletariat and the population in the Donbass, they claim that the vast majority of Ukrainians remained loyal to the Central Rada. To underline this, they note that the rival assembly in Kharkiv, established by the Bolsheviks in December 1917, attracted delegates of no more than one-third of the Ukrainian local councils and that it hosted very few representatives of the Ukrainian peasantry. Turchenko (1995, 2001) points out that the Bolsheviks quickly resorted to other means to establish power when they realized that the Ukrainians would not join them voluntarily. In strong language, he accuses the Bolsheviks of eliminating democracy, persecuting Ukrainian culture, terrorizing the population and pillaging cities and countryside, and argues that these tactics only provoked more resistance: 'The establishment of Bolshevik power in Ukraine, by means of deceit, violence and direct interference from abroad, inevitably had to become and became the object of nationwide opposition' (Turchenko 1995, p. 58; 2001, p. 97).

Kul'chits'kyi and Shapoval (2003), on the other hand, refrain from using emotionally charged terminology and present a more cautious account of the Bolshevik takeover. They note, for instance, that the popularity of the Bolsheviks rose steeply after they exchanged their initial principles regarding the continuation of the war and the collectivization of agriculture for slogans which called for an immediate end to the war and an unconditional handover of land to the peasants. But the authors also underline the undemocratic nature of Bolshevism and claim that Lenin's followers only adopted populist slogans to increase their chances of organizing a successful coup d'état. Moreover, the Bolsheviks are said to have stooped to terror after their capture of Kyiv in February 1918, instigating a massacre 'the Ukrainian capital had not seen since the raids of Khan Batia [following the collapse of Kyivan Rus' in the thirteenth century, JGJ]' (Kul'chits'kyi & Shapoval, 2003, p. 69).

Despite their differences, neither Turchenko nor Kul'chits'kyi and Shapoval engage in ethnic boundary making. The Bolsheviks are not presented as a uniquely Russian movement as it is conceded that workers and the poorer sections of the Ukrainian peasantry were allured by their message. Nonetheless, Turchenko (1995, p. 180, 181; 2001, pp. 224, 225) underlines the foreign origin of the Bolsheviks by stating that Ukrainians made up less than a quarter of the members of the Communist Party of Ukraine in the early 1920s and that many top ranking officials frowned upon the Ukrainian language, seeing it as a symbol of a backward, petty bourgeois peasant culture.

Undoubtedly the third negative period examined here, the collectivization of agriculture and its dramatic consequence, the 1932–33 Famine, is the most traumatic episode in Ukrainian history. Understandably, the textbooks are highly

critical of the role of the Soviet regime in these events, attributing sole responsibility to Stalin's government for the occurrence of the disaster (see also Janmaat, 2006). Both Turchenko (1995, 2002) and Kul'chyts'kyi *et al.* (1994; 2003) note that Stalin's principal reason for pursuing the collectivization of agriculture was an easy extraction of and control over resources from the countryside. They also agree that the famine was artificial, being caused by food confiscation campaigns rather than natural events, and that it was a deliberate instrument of the authorities to crush the opposition of the Ukrainian peasantry to the collectivization drive.

Yet, as was the case in the narrative about the Bolsheviks, there are conspicuous differences between the authors. Turchenko's text is more radical in tone using strong normative language to discredit Stalin's regime. We read, for example, about the 'cruel crimes' of Stalinism, about 'cruel aggressors', the 'monstrous' scale of the Famine in Ukraine, victims of the 'genocide' of 1932–33 and about a totalitarian regime 'terrorizing' the countryside (Turchenko, 1995, pp. 225–228). Kul'chyts'kyi *et al.* (1994; 2003) are also highly critical of Stalin's rule but use more neutral terminology. A second difference concerns the identification of the victims. Whereas Kul'chyts'kyi *et al.* (1994, p. 194) contend that the agricultural policies were primarily targeting the peasantry—'In reality however these activities were consciously geared towards the slow physical annihilation of peasant families'—Turchenko argues that the whole Ukrainian nation suffered from these policies. Thus he opens his account of the Famine with the following statement: 'One of the most cruel crimes committed by Stalinism against the Ukrainian nation was the Famine of 1932–1933' (Turchenko, 1995, p. 225; 2002, p. 279). In the concluding paragraph he writes:

The Tragedy of 1932–33 decisively crushed the resistance to the Kolchoz-feudal system and essentially eliminated the forces that stood up for the vexed national rights. Precisely this is what the totalitarian regime aimed for, what its representatives in Ukraine cynically discussed. (Turchenko, 1995, p. 227; 2002, p. 282)

By hinting that the rest of the Ukrainian nation was as much attacked by the Soviet authorities as the peasants resisting collectivization, this extract clearly reinforces the nationalist image of the Soviet regime as a hostile, malicious force suppressing the Ukrainians.

Given the severity of the disaster and the obvious involvement of the Soviet regime, one would expect the Famine period to be the prime candidate for nationalist myth-making of the type that sees ethnic others as the sole perpetrators and the ethnic 'us' as the sole victims of the catastrophe. Yet, as in the account of the Bolsheviks seizure of power, the textbooks refrain from ethnic stereotyping. Thus the state and party officials involved in the collectivization and food confiscation programmes are not pigeonholed as Russians or Jews. On the other hand, the downside of not addressing ethnic differences is that ethnic Ukrainians are not presented in an unfavourable light either. Thus the participation of many ethnic Ukrainians in the grain-requisition bands pillaging the countryside (Wilson, 2002) is an embarrassing detail not mentioned by any of the textbooks. Therefore the

textbook narratives do leave the overall impression that ethnic Ukrainians were only *victims* of and not *collaborators* in the food confiscation campaigns.

### Portrayals of the ethnic other in 'positive' periods

Let us now turn to periods of foreign rule that are characterized by peace, economic growth, rising standards of living and expanding liberties, in other words the 'positive' periods. The first of these episodes is the reign of Alexander II (1855–1881). In the aftermath of the lost Crimean War this 'enlightened' tsar initiated major reforms, including the abolition of serfdom, an overhaul of the justice system, a tempering of censorship, autonomy for the universities, elected assemblies at the local and provincial levels and universal military conscription. Following the Polish uprising in the early 1860s, however, he also curtailed the cultural liberties of national minorities and pursued a policy of Russification. How do the textbooks appreciate this mixed legacy of expanding civic liberties, political reform and economic growth, on the one hand, and repression of Ukrainian cultural activities on the other?

As it turns out, the textbooks (Sarbei, 1995; Turchenko & Moroko, 2004) do appreciate the reforms but they immediately qualify them by saying that they were largely ineffective or served other interests than those of the Ukrainians themselves. Both books for instance acknowledge that the abolition of serfdom constituted a major step forward, freeing serfs from their landlords, offering them freedom of movement and allowing them to buy land and goods and engage in commercial activities. Yet, both authors are quick to point out that the reform was designed from above by the landowning nobility and therefore primarily served the interests of the landowners. They also observe that the reform did not improve the living conditions of the vast majority of peasants, crippled as these rural masses were by rents and feudal labour duties that the reform had not eliminated.

More fundamentally, the reforms are judged as being solely inspired by a desire to strengthen the Russian state and to catch up with western powers in socio-economic development. The Russian government thus never truly intended to grant more liberties to the population and to the non-Russian nationalities, it is argued. Turchenko and Moroko (2004) for instance explain that the emancipation of the serfs created the supply of labour necessary for the development of industry in Ukraine. This industrialization, however, is described as one-sided, producing only raw materials and semi-manufactured goods as input for Russian industries, and is presented as the centre's major tool of economic colonization and exploitation. Understandably, both textbooks also deplore the tsarist decrees banning the use of Ukrainian in schools and in the printed media, seeing them as prime examples of the policy of domination and oppression by the Russian state. Turchenko and Moroko (2004, p. 153) are particularly outspoken on the intentions of the Russian state under Alexander II: 'As before, Russian domestic politics rested on three fundamental principles: unification, bureaucratization and Russification'.

As it turns out, bad intentions are not just attributed to the Russian state. Sarbei (1995) for instance is overtly depreciatory of the Russians, Poles, Jews and other

non-Ukrainians. Discussing the plight of the Ukrainians in the second half of the nineteenth century he observes that 'The majority of the landed nobility, and most of all those of Russian or Polish descent, displayed a hostile attitude towards the Ukrainian national idea. (...) The trade sector fell almost completely in the hands of Russians, Jews, Armenians and Greeks, who often did not operate as civilized merchants but as barbaric-predatory wholesale buyers and sellers' (Sarbei, 1995, pp. 105, 108). The succeeding textbook by Turchenko and Moroko (2004), by contrast, refrains from depicting inter-ethnic relations in stereotypical terms. Comparing the social position of Ukrainians to those of other nationalities, it provides a neutral description of the economic activities and settlement patterns of Russians and Jews and avoids negative qualifications. As with the narrative on the elimination of the Cossack Hetmanate, this could be indicative of a trend in textbook writing aiming to produce more de-nationalized historiographies.

I have identified the Soviet 1920s as the second positive period in Ukraine's history as this episode is generally appreciated as a time of relatively liberal conditions in both socio-economic and cultural domains. Lenin's pragmatic New Economic Policy (NEP) left the countryside in peace, which enabled peasants to freely manage the lands allocated to them by the Bolshevik land reforms. In the cultural sphere, the Ukrainians benefited from the Bolshevik campaign to combat illiteracy and invigorate the languages and cultures of the non-Russian nationalities in the Soviet Union (the so-called *Korenizatsia* policy, which in Ukraine came to be known as *Ukrainizatsia*).

It appears that the textbooks are ambivalent about this episode. They present a cautious and qualified positive appraisal of the NEP. Turchenko (1995, 2002) and Kyl'chys'kyi and Shapoval (2003) for instance both note that the conditions for the peasantry improved markedly after the authorities exchanged the rationing policy of the civil war period for taxation in kind. They further observe that the land redistribution scheme greatly benefited the poorest sections of the peasantry and that agricultural output rose sharply and had caught up with pre-revolution levels by 1927. The textbooks are even unreservedly positive about the government campaign to stimulate agricultural cooperatives, saying that the peasantry eagerly made use of these incentives to found cooperatives for the processing and sale of their products. Yet, it is argued that the Communist Party from the very onset had a much more comprehensive kind of cooperative in mind, and never abandoned the idea of a complete collectivization of agricultural land. Turchenko (1995, p. 189; 2002, p. 236) contends that this constituted a major threat which hung like the 'sword of Damocles' over the peasantry. More fundamentally, he deplores that the freedom in the economic sphere was not matched by political rights, leaving the peasantry powerless and exposed to the arbitrariness and ambitious industrialization plans of the communist apparatchiks.

An equally hesitant account is given of the party-endorsed Ukrainianization campaign in the 1920s. On the one hand, this language policy is appreciated, as it 'attracted many representatives of the Ukrainian intelligentsia to the process of cultural rebuilding, who sincerely attempted to serve the nation and to contribute

to its social-economic and spiritual revival' (Turchenko 1995, p.194; 2002, p.240). In a similar manner, the books value the achievements such as the reduction of illiteracy, the mass admission of Ukrainians into the student population and the expansion of Ukrainian-language education, publications and official documents. On the other hand, they argue that Ukrainianization was not strong enough to have a lasting impact on the language regime in the most important sphere of public life, the Communist Party bureaucracy, where Russian remained the dominant language. Turchenko notes that many party officials, particularly Russian or Russian-speaking ones, were negatively disposed towards Ukrainianization, 'sabotaging it in all possible ways' (Turchenko, 1995, p.194; 2002, p.241). Moreover, the books accuse the Bolshevik regime of seeing Ukrainianization only as a tool to indoctrinate the population with the communist ideology rather than as a goal in itself. Kul'chyts'kyi and Shapoval (2003, p.200) for instance note:

The cultural activities of the state were mainly directed at the education of the masses in the spirit of communism. The party controlled the content of the national-cultural process and demanded that cultural life was national in form and socialist in content, so that it did not contradict the communist doctrine.

In sum, the books argue that the economic and cultural liberties of the 1920s were always subordinate to industrialization and the consolidation of the state and the party. As soon as the former began to be seen as conflicting with these objectives, they were abandoned.

The third 'positive' period of foreign rule investigated here is Khrushchev's Thaw (1956–1965). This period is widely recognized as a welcome and promising change to the suffocating totalitarianism of the Stalinist era. It stands out for its increased openness, economic decentralization, diversification of industry, rising standards of living, flowering of national cultures and rehabilitation of the victims of Stalinist persecution. The man who set this in motion, Nikita Khrushchev, is generally depicted as a rather rude and unsophisticated man with nonetheless good intentions. An authoritative source like the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (EB) for instance describes him as 'a patriot who genuinely wanted to improve the lot of all Soviet citizens' (EB, 1994, p.994). The EB also notes that Khrushchev was a Russian who had grown up in Ukraine and that this facilitated the careers of many Ukrainians in Moscow. Khrushchev's 'Thaw' however is also remembered for the continuation of Russification, failed agricultural experiments and rash diplomacy.

The textbook narratives of the Khrushchev era are very much in line with those of the other two 'positive' periods of foreign rule in Ukrainian history. On the one hand there is genuine appreciation for the reforms. Turchenko *et al.* (1995, 2004) for instance note that the economic decentralization was conducive for the modernization of industry and the development of light industries, and that standards of living and the construction of new homes rose sharply in the second half of the 1950s. Similarly, they value the relative freedom of expression which is said to have enabled a resurrection of Ukrainian literature and arts. On the other hand, it is argued that the Soviet authorities were not recognizing the intrinsic value of the reforms,

perceiving them instead as instruments for the attainment of other objectives. As Turchenko *et al.* (1995, p. 56; 2004, p. 124) phrase it:

The party leadership realized that without a certain measure of democratization it would not be possible to modernize the country, accelerate its economic development and maintain its status as a military superpower.

Moreover, Turchenko *et al.* are never tired of reminding the reader that the freedom of expression was still very much restricted and that people who dared to cross the line were relentlessly persecuted. Moreover, they deplore Khrushchev's conviction that all Soviet nationalities would spontaneously assimilate into a Russian-speaking Soviet nation (*sblizhennia i sliania natsii*), claiming that it ushered in a renewed Russification campaign that further weakened the position of Ukrainian in education, the media and other public domains.

As in the narratives of the other periods, the textbooks refrain from highlighting the ethnic background of the people and characters discussed. This has the distinct advantage that ethnic others are not judged negatively. Yet, it also excludes positive appraisals. It could be argued that the Khrushchev era—par excellence—has all the ingredients for more positive evaluations of ethnic others given Khrushchev's own origin as a Russian Ukrainian, the careers of Ukrainians in central institutions and the socio-economic progress in Ukraine itself. The fact that the textbooks fail to portray Russians or other Soviet nationalities in a more favourable light could reflect the allergy Ukrainian historians have to the Soviet slogan of 'the brotherhood of all Soviet nationalities', but it could also be indicative of a nationalist motivated unwillingness to acknowledge the positive contributions ethnic others made to Ukraine's development.

## Discussion

This article has examined how Ukrainian history textbooks portray the ethnic other, both as foreign ruler and as non-native national group. The most conspicuous feature of the textbooks is the unanimous condemnation of the foreign ruler—Russia in the years prior to the October Revolution and the Soviet Union in the years thereafter. The tsarist authorities and the Soviet regime are attributed malicious intentions, irrespective of their policies and the consequences for Ukraine. Never are the rulers in St Petersburg or Moscow perceived as being genuinely committed to the improvement of the living conditions and civic rights of Ukrainians. They are always shown as being motivated by a determination to strengthen their hold on power and to consolidate the state vis-à-vis other powerful states in the international arena. The textbooks do not deny that there have been periods of relatively liberal rule when Ukraine benefited from economic and cultural reforms initiated by the centre, but they contend that the Russian and Soviet authorities had an instrumental attitude towards these reforms, never seeing prosperity and democratization as ends in themselves. As soon as liberal reforms were seen as conflicting with the consolidation of power and the unity of the state, the centre would abandon them, the books argue. It needs to be reminded that Tsarist Russia and the Soviet Union

were, of course, not democratic regimes, which lends some credence to the argument that they were mostly driven by power considerations. Yet, it would seem too harsh a judgement to assign only bad intentions to these foreign rulers, particularly in the face of evidence from other sources which credit some Soviet leaders with positive moral qualities. The exceptionally critical accounts of foreign rulers are therefore likely to reflect a desire to find a solid justification for Ukrainian statehood and to foster strong feelings of patriotism among youngsters. They send the political message that prosperity and freedom for the Ukrainian people can only be guaranteed by an independent Ukrainian state (Shapoval, 1999). In this sense the textbook narratives on foreign regimes have a distinct nationalist bias.

The same cannot be said about appraisals of the ethnic other as a national group. The majority of the textbooks analysed in this study refrained from putting ethnic labels on individuals or groups. The few instances where this does happen and where negative judgements fall onto Russians and Jews are counterbalanced by excerpts criticizing ethnic Ukrainians or highlighting conflicting interests within the Ukrainian ethnic group. Only the failure of the books to present Russians, Jews or other non-Ukrainian groups in a positive light may be seen as an omission constituting a small ethnic bias. Nonetheless, the absence of any positive evaluations of ethnic others in combination with the harsh judgement on Tsarist Russia and the Soviet Union may well produce or maintain strong feelings of alienation among Russians and other minorities. These groups could well interpret the textbook rhetoric as a verdict condemning them for their 'collaboration' with the foreign regime in the 'suppression' of Ukrainians, and as a message telling them they are not welcome in Ukraine.

There is no reason, however, to end this paper with gloomy conjectures. The analysis has also shown that the newest generation of textbooks present more balanced accounts of inter-ethnic relations than the first series of textbooks. Moreover, although the rule of former president Kuchma will not be remembered for its commitment to human rights, democracy and the rule of law, Ukraine's educational authorities have increasingly sought to involve international agencies in the preparation of educational reforms in this period. From 1996, for instance, the Ministry of Education and the Council of Europe (COE) have jointly organized a series of seminars and conferences in Ukraine on reforming the teaching of history and on the COE's Education for Democratic Citizenship program. Remarkably, the participants of these seminars (civic servants, teachers and textbook writers) were not afraid to be highly critical of the state of history education in Ukraine, urging textbook authors to write books that present multi-perspective views including those of minorities and encourage student creativity and critical thinking. One civic servant, for instance, denounced the current textbooks for ascribing intentions to historical leaders that they could not have possessed (Council of Europe, 1999; 2000). The policy recommendations resulting from these conferences did not fall on deaf ears as the Ministry of Education incorporated them in the central requirements (the so-called State Standards) for the curriculum of the new 12-year school system. The new standard for the theme 'Knowledge of Society' (*suspil'stoznavstvo*), which



includes History of Ukraine, for instance, mentions the cultivation of tolerance and respect for other nations, critical thinking, responsibility, independent judgement and the ability to make a conscious choice as key objectives of the new curriculum (Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, 2004, p. 3).

It is by no means certain, however, that the scholars on whom the Ministry depends for the writing of curricula and textbooks are equally supportive of a major reform of history education. Typically these scholars belong to the Ukrainian intelligentsia and consider it their lifework to expose the Tsarist and Soviet 'crimes' against the Ukrainian nation.<sup>4</sup> Obviously, the single anti-Soviet narrative they have in mind conflicts with efforts to promote a multiplicity of perspectives. There are already signs that the language of reform of the state standards is not filtering down in curricula and textbooks. For instance, the new history curriculum for the fifth grade as before presents a strictly chronological narrative of Ukrainian history and specifies in detail the content, the volume and the timing of the subject matter.<sup>5</sup> Plans to institute an integrated history course combining world and national history are viewed with equal suspicion by these scholars as they are seen as covert measures to reduce the number of hours and thus to economize on history education (Kul'chyts'kyi, 2000).

Yet, it is not only the civil servants at the Ministry who are pressing for changes. There are movements at the grassroots level which suggest that there is broad support for reform. A survey among history and civics teachers conducted in September-October 2001 for instance found that making myths of past events and outdated approaches to the selection of facts and their interpretation were mentioned as key problems in the current history courses (Verbytska, 2004). Moreover, the all-Ukrainian Association of History Teachers Nova Doba has taken the initiative to develop an auxiliary textbook on Ukrainian history for the tenth grade in cooperation with the international umbrella organization of history teachers Euroclio and several foreign experts. This book (Komarov *et al.*, 2004) closely resembles western textbooks in approach and teaching methods.

All these developments indicate that history education has become the object of a heated public debate in which interests clash and nation-building increasingly has to compete with other pedagogical objectives. This, it might be argued, is only one of the many indicators that democracy is growing to maturity in Ukraine, a process so vividly illustrated by the peaceful civic revolution in December 2004 and the orderly parliamentary elections of March 2006. Under these conditions, it seems only a matter of time before the lively public debate penetrates the schools and influences the history lessons. If this happens, history will indeed repeat itself, and the aforementioned evolutionary model by Kuzio will have rightly predicted the developments in history education.

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## Notes

1. Except for Kul'chyts'kyi *et al.* the titles of the first generation textbooks are given in a transcription from Russian. This is because I read the Russian translations.
2. For a list of approved textbooks, see *Osvita Ukrainy*, 2004, no. 60–61, p. 15.
3. For the first national curriculum of the History of Ukraine course, see Ministry of Education (1996).
4. For an example of this attitude, see the open letter of February 2005 which criticises a campaign led by communist deputies to rehabilitate the Soviet regime, particularly regarding its role in World War II. This letter, which was addressed to the president and parliament, was signed by a number of well-known historians (Hurzhi, 2005).
5. For the new curriculum, see *Navchal'na Programa dlia Zahal'noosvitnikh Navchal'nykh Zakladiv (12 Richna Shkola), Istoria Ukraina, 5 Klas* (2005) (teaching programme for 12 year comprehensive schools, 5<sup>th</sup> class).

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